



# *“Joy of All Who Sorrow”*

No. 100 March 2017

# St Dositheus

## And Abba Dorotheus



**St Dositheus did not practice any special form of self-mortification. Unlike many monks, he ate every day. He kept only the vigils required of all and did not even come to church in time for them. However, St Dorotheus possessed the gift of guiding to salvation beginners such as the blessed Dositheus, whom he led to the Lord on the short path of sacred obedience.**

Saint Dositheus (19 Feb/4 March), a disciple of Saint Abba Dorotheus (5/18 June), lived during the sixth-seventh centuries, and was raised in a rich and renowned family. Young Dositheus listened to tales of the holy city of Jerusalem from the servants of his grandfather, a military commander, and this kindled within him the desire to go there. Soon his wish came true, when a close friend of his grandfather was going on a trip there and agreed to take him along.

At Gethsemane, he gazed for a long time at a picture of the Dread Last judgment. Suddenly he saw beside him a majestic woman clad in purple, who explained to him what was depicted in the image. The youth asked, "How is it possible to avoid the eternal torments?"

She replied, "Fast, do not eat meat, and pray constantly to God." After this, his strange guide suddenly became invisible. She who conversed with him had been the Most Holy Theotokos. The appearance of the Mother of God produced a strong impression on the youth, and he decided to enter a monastery headed by Abba Seridus (13/26 August), and populated by such great ascetics as Saints Barsanuphius (6/19 February) and John (19 June/2 July). Dositheus, asking to be accepted among the brethren, was sent to the Elder Dorotheus. Saint Dositheus fulfilled his obedience in the monastery infirmary, caring for all the sick.

Saint Dorotheus trained his disciple in abstinence and fasting, gradually decreasing the quantity of food he consumed each day. He also weaned the youth from vexation and anger, by constantly reminding him that every unkind word said to a sick person, is said to Jesus Christ Himself. If ever Dositheus lost his temper and said something rough to one of the patients, he would retire at once to the storeroom and lament. Other attendants would follow him, and when attempts to console him proved unsuccessful, they would entreat Dorotheus, "Please, Father, go see why Brother Dositheus is weeping. We have no idea what could have upset him so."

Dorotheus would find his disciple sitting on the floor in tears and ask "Why are you upset?"

"Forgive me Father. I got angry and spoke unkindly to my brother," Dositheus would explain.

"So, you are not ashamed to speak harshly to your brother!" Father Dorotheus would shout. "Do you not understand that your brother is Christ, and that it is Christ you are offending?" At this Dositheus would hang his head in silence. When Father Dorotheus decided that Dositheus had wept enough, he would say softly, "God forgive you. Rise, make a new beginning. Try to do better, and the Lord will help." Hearing this, Dositheus would get up and happily return to his work, certain that God had pardoned him. As time went on, the attendants became accustomed to this. When Dositheus retired to weep, they would go straight to the blessed Dorotheus and announce, "Father, you are required in the storeroom!"

One day, the blessed Dorotheus shouted at him, "Fetch wine and a sop of bread, Dositheus!" The disciple brought a jug of wine and a loaf of bread and presented them for a blessing. "What now?" asked Dorotheus in an irritated voice.

"Please give the blessing; I have brought bread and wine, as you commanded," Dositheus answered.

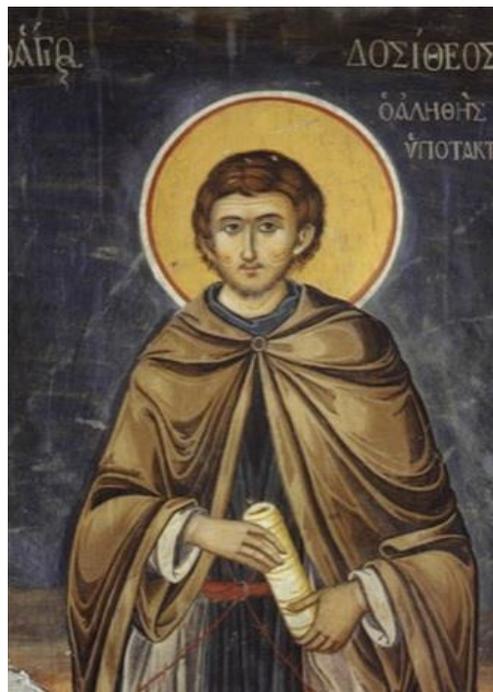
“Imbecile!” exclaimed Dorotheus. “I told you to fetch bread and wine, because you bellow like a drunk Goth.” Dositheus made a prostration, took back what he had brought, and never again spoke in a loud voice.

By revealing his thoughts to the Elder and through unhesitating obedience, Saint Dositheus liberated his soul from passions. In five years of dwelling in the monastery, Dositheus had never been disobedient, followed his own will or acted out of passion. At the end of this time, he fell into serious sickness. Patiently enduring his sufferings, he prayed constantly and never complained. Not long before his death he asked a message be sent to Saint Barsanuphius: “Father, grant me pardon, I cannot live much longer.”

He replied, “Have patience, my son, for the mercy of God is near.”

After several days Saint Dositheus again sent this message to the Elder: “My master, I cannot live any longer.” Then Saint Barsanuphius blessed him to depart to God, and he asked the dying one to pray for all the brethren when he stood before the Holy Trinity.

The brethren were astonished that the great Abba Barsanuphius would ask the prayers of a monk who had lived at the monastery for only five years without any great ascetic accomplishments. But after the death of the young monk, a certain experienced ascetic was praying that the final resting place of the departed fathers of the monastery might be revealed to him, and in a dream he saw the holy fathers standing together in a place of light, and among them, a youth rejoicing. From his description, everyone realised that it was Dositheus. Saint Dositheus was given great glory in the Kingdom of Heaven for his perfect obedience to his Elder and for cutting off his own will.



# St John of Kronstadt

## On Almsgiving

"Thou shalt love Thy neighbour as thyself." We ought to have all things in common. As the sun, the air, fire, water and earth are common to us all, so ought also (in part) food and drink, money, books, and (in general) all the Lord's gifts to be shared in common; for they are given in common to all, and yet are easily divisible for distribution amongst many. For we have nothing of our own, but everything belongs to God. And it is not just for the rich to keep their superfluity in their treasuries when there are so many poor people in need of the means of existence, of necessary clothing and dwellings. However, it is just that the laborious should enjoy abundance, and that the idle should endure poverty and misery. Therefore, if we know that some are poor only through their own idleness and laziness, with such we are not obliged to share the abundance earned by our labour. "If any would not work," says the Apostle Paul, "neither should he eat." But the crying poverty arising from old age, exhaustion, from sickness, from fruitless and badly-paid labour, from really difficult conditions of life, from a numerous family, from bad harvests, we must always hasten to help, especially those of us who are rich. We must be guided by the history of the times of the Apostles, by the example of the early Church.

Do not despise any man, however poor he may be; but behave with full respect and kindness to every well-intentioned man, especially to the poor, as to our members worthy of compassion — or, rather, to members of Christ — otherwise you will cruelly wound your soul. O, how easy it would appear to be to live in simplicity and love, and yet how difficult it is for our corrupt hearts to live in love! At every step there is a pretext for enmity against our brother. For as the poor and suffering compel us to compassion, so let us mutually compel ourselves to almsgiving; let us compel ourselves to good, works, whilst there is yet time, as sin compels us to that by which we continually transgress and anger God, and increase for ourselves the food of the fire of Gehenna, which, by degrees, already begins to be kindled here in our hearts, and foreshows to us the eternal flame, where there shall be everlasting lamentation and gnashing of teeth.

All offerings and charity to the poor will not replace love for our neighbour, if there is no love in the heart; therefore, in bestowing charity, we must be careful that it should be bestowed lovingly, from a sincere heart, willingly, and not with a feeling of vexation against the poor. The very word charity shows that it should be an act or an offering of the heart, and should be bestowed with feeling or pity for the unfortunate condition of the poor person, and with a feeling of, or contrition for, our sins, to cleanse which the charity is bestowed; "for alms ... [according to the Scripture] shall purge away all sin." He who bestows charity unwillingly and with vexation, avariciously, does not recognise his sins, has not learned to know himself. Charity is, first of all, a benefit to those who bestow it. Be charitable to the poor, willingly, without suspiciousness, doubt, and minute investigation. remembering that in the person of the poor you do good to Christ Himself, as it is written: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." Know that your charity is always nothing in comparison with man, that child of God; know that your alms are but earth and dust; know that any material charity must absolutely be accompanied by spiritual charity: kind, brotherly, open-hearted, loving behaviour towards your neighbour; do not let him notice that you are doing him a favour, do not appear proud.

"He that giveth," it is said, "let him do it with simplicity.... he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." See, then, that you do not take away the value from your material charity through not showing spiritual charity. Know that on the day of judgment the Master will test your good works too. Remember that both heaven and earth are given to man, for to him "is reserved in heaven an inheritance incorruptible;" for man, God the Father did not spare His Only Begotten Son, but delivered Him unto death.

All should provide themselves with the holy oil of charity and good works, so that they may not appear empty-handed before the Judge on the day of the terrible trial; that they may not appear naked and bare of virtue on the day when all hearts shall be scrutinised. You do not give your own, but you give that which belongs to God, to God's children, who bear the cross, and have scarcely anywhere to lay their heads. You are only a steward of God's property; you are the daily servant of the least of Christ's brethren; and, therefore, you must fulfil your duty meekly, humbly, and unwearingly. You will thus be serving Christ, the Judge and Recompenser — a great honour, a high dignity! Do good work with gladness. Money comes to you easily, without great labour; and you should distribute it easily, without thinking much about it. Your labours are generously rewarded; be generous to others. They are not rewarded in accordance with their merit; do not give to others in accordance with their merits, but for their need's sake. Almsgiving is good and salutary when to it is united the amendment of the heart from pride, malice, envy, slothfulness, indolence, gluttony, fornication, falsehood, deceitfulness, and other sins. But if the man is not careful to amend his heart, trusting only to his alms, then he will obtain but little benefit from them, for he builds with one hand and destroys with the other.

When you give alms to one who begs of you, and who, apparently, is not deserving of and does not require your charity — owing to which your heart grudges him the alms given — repent of this; for the Divine holy Love also bestows His blessings upon us, even when we have a sufficiency of them already. Love for your neighbour ought to say to you, "Even although he has something, still it will do no harm if I add to his prosperity (although, to tell the truth, a few pence will not greatly add to or amend his fortunes). God gives to me, why then should I not give to the needy?" I say to the needy, for who would hold out his hand without need? Had you only received gifts from God in accordance with your merits, you would have been a beggar yourself.



# Notes & Jottings

## PANIKHIDA

The panikhida (Memorial Service) for Fr Elias and Matushka Barbara Jones will be sung in our church at Mettingham at 2pm on Sunday 26 March in respect of the first anniversary of their deaths last year. Weather permitting we will visit their graves in the churchyard here.

Priest Elias and Matushka Barbara – Memory Eternal.

## SAINT BOTOLPH PILGRIMAGE

This year we will visit Iken on Saturday 1 July, the day immediately following his feast day. The Moleben, with the Akathist in honour of St Botolph, will be sung at 11am in the ancient church built on the site of his monastery. Iken is just south of Snape in Suffolk. Do join us for this annual event. It is important that we do everything possible to revive the memory of the saints who, in the first millennium, brought Christianity to this country.

St Botolph of Iken, pray for us.

## EASTER CARDS & CDs IN STOCK

Easter ikon cards (the Descent into Hades) in full colour are available, with envelopes at 20p each.

Also we have a few CDs in stock. The subjects available are:

Chants of Great Lent and Holy Easter £7 Pilgrim Songs Shining Bright £7

Chants of the All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy £7 The Eucharist £10

What Earthly Joy (Orthodox Hymns) £10

## DIRECTORY

The directory of parishes and clergy is normally published by the Orthodox Fellowship of St John the Baptist at the end of January. When we enquired about it, the reply was that there will be an edition for 2017 but that it will be *later than usual for unavoidable reasons*. So, watch this space!

## SAINT EDBURGA

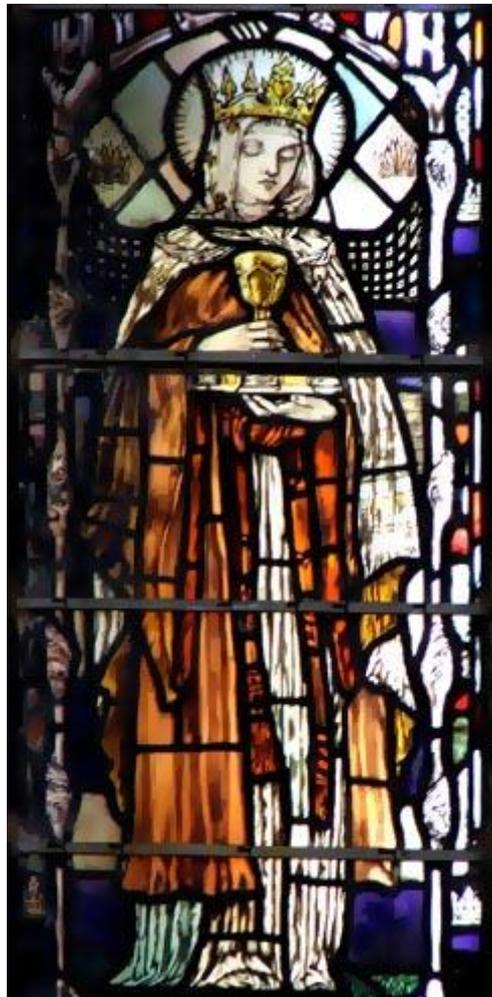
In 2012 we reported in *Orthodox News* (Vol 24 No 1) that in Bicester an extraordinary thing had happened. This was the report:

*A block of flats was demolished. It seems that the site was formerly occupied by Bicester Priory. Excavations have now revealed at least thirteen Mediaeval burials and a lead casket (reliquary) containing bones. It is thought that these might be the relics of St Edburga. It seems curious that these discoveries were not made when the block of flats was being built. Since it was known that it was the site of the old priory, were no excavations carried out at the time? How could they dig the foundations without disturbing the items that have only now been found?*

Having heard no more about this matter, we asked Fr Stephen Platt (St Nicholas, Oxford) for an update. This is what he told us:

*Concerning Saint Edburga - the reason why everything went quiet on this story is because further archaeological tests apparently revealed the find to have been a mediaeval burial, thus discounting the suggestion that these were the relics of the saint. A disappointment, perhaps, but good that this was at least clarified.*

St Edburga was a daughter (or possibly granddaughter) of King Penda of Mercia. She was a sister of St Edith and both of them embraced the monastic life. St Edburga died in about AD650 and her relics were later enshrined in Bicester Priory. Apparently, a Papal order dated 1500, required St Edburga's relics to be taken to Flanders. If all her relics were removed, what remained in the shrine in Bicester Priory? In 1536 the Sheriff of Oxford, Sir Simon Harcourt, was required to oversee the demolition of the priory church in Bicester. He somehow managed to salvage the shrine and removed it to St Michael's Church, Stanton Harcourt, where it remains to this day.





COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF THE MOTHER OF GOD  
*JOY OF ALL WHO SORROW*

**MARCH 2017**

**Monday 27 February ~ Friday 3 March**  
7.30pm ~ Great Compline with the Great Canon

**Saturday 4 March**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 5 March**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Sunday of Orthodoxy)**

**Saturday 11 March**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 12 March**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (St Gregory Palamas)**

**Saturday 18 March**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 19 March**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (Adoration of the Holy Cross)**

**Saturday 25 March**

*7.30pm ~ Vigil*

**Sunday 26 March**

**10.10am ~ Hours and Divine Liturgy (St John of the Ladder)**



Exiled from Paradise, we must become exiled from the world if we hope to return.

Fr. Seraphim Rose

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